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The Peter Pan Paradox:
A Discussion of the Light and Dark in J.M. Barrie's Shadow Child

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Undergraduate English Honors Thesis

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James Matthew Barrie begins his most beloved tale with a simple, notable line: “All children, except one, grow up” (Barrie 1), which embodies the entirety of his story’s foundation: a boy who never grew up. Since the first publication of Barrie’s renowned play in 1928, *Peter Pan* has influenced children’s literature in an enormous way, making Barrie’s story become a common household name among children and adults alike. Through Peter, Barrie creates a paradoxical character by introducing the reader to a unique little boy who daily battles fear and desire towards the idea of growing up. Barrie personally dealt with these feelings his entire life and manifested them into his character Peter, who declares hatred towards adulthood, while conversely longing for adulthood by wanting to become an adult. Through this, the story forces its readers into their own inner conflicts because Barrie gives them a choice. He lets the reader decide whether they will agree with Peter Pan and hate adulthood, or side with the parents, who say adulthood actually has benefits and needs to be embraced with acceptance.

Not only this, but the story also brings up the question of whether Peter Pan embodies darkness or innocence at his core due to his actions and character tendencies. Most recently, the television series *Once Upon a Time* tackled this question by making Peter Pan a villain, willing to do anything to keep his youth. The screenwriters of the show give a new view on the familiar childhood character in order to challenge the original and offer new questions to the audience. My thesis will trace the history of this beloved tale, starting with addressing Barrie’s life by focusing on how his own life affected the story. I will end with comparing Barrie’s original *Peter Pan* to the most recent adaptation by *Once Upon a Time*. I will bring up the idea of

seeing Peter Pan as a dark figure, arguing that we possibly have viewed him with too much innocence for too long. Not only that, but I will show the reader just how much influence the people in Barrie's life had on his famous character.

Barrie's life shows how the boy Peter Pan originated long before the story became real. James Matthew Barrie, born on May 9, 1860, grew up with parents who held certain ideals and standards for their children. One of these standards involved becoming educated in school, an idea his mother believed to be the most important thing. His mother, Margaret Ogilvy (some Scottish women kept their maiden name), longed for her children to become successful adults, something all parents' want for their children. However, even at a young age, Barrie did not show signs of a longing for school or possessing any sort of educational brilliance. This set him apart from his brothers, especially his brother David who happened to be the apple of his mother's eye as he showed great promises in education. As a result, Barrie lived in David's shadow, affecting the way he viewed himself.

Though Barrie exhibited a slight air of jealousy towards his brother, David is actually an important piece in the writing of *Peter Pan*, as some speculate Barrie created Peter because of David. This theory stems from the tragedy that occurred just a few days shy of David's 14th birthday. Tragically, David died in an ice-skating accident that resulted in their mother's depression. Since he died before he reached adulthood, he became forever viewed as the boy who never grew up, at least, that is how his mother, Margaret Ogilvy, viewed him:

If Margaret Ogilvy drew a measure of comfort from the notion that David, in dying a boy, would remain a boy forever, Barrie drew inspiration. It would be another thirty-three years before that inspiration emerged in the shape of Peter Pan, but here was the germ, rooted in his mind and soul from age six (Birkin 5).

Tragedy does something to a person, forever changing them. Though Peter Pan does experience tragedy in his story, Barrie experienced it for him, thus making Peter run away from real life as a young child. Since he lived in a make-believe world, Peter never had to experience any real tragic event, or anything that the real world brings. The death of David affected Barrie in more ways than one, but mostly influencing his future depiction of Peter Pan by making him the boy who did not grow up.

With David's death and the idea of never growing up forming in Barrie's mind, Barrie oppositely had to grow up and take on a level of responsibility. He saw how David's death affected his mother and therefore made himself responsible for making her happy again. Janet Dunbar, author and biographer on Barrie, writes about it as such:

One day he was the youngest brother, noisy and carefree, not yet ready to be dreamed over but still his mother's own and separate child. The next day he was a substitute for one who could never be replaced, and so, he knew with a deep instance, it would always be (Dunbar 11).

The responsibility Barrie took on resulted in the growth of his relationship with his mother as they spent more time together. This special relationship Barrie formed with his mother separates him from Peter Pan because Peter ran away as a child, never having a close relationship with his mother. In fact, he came to think of mothers in disgust: "Now, if Peter had ever quite had a mother, he no longer missed her. He could do very well without one. He had thought them out, and remembered only their bad points" (Barrie 135). Though Peter thought ill of mothers, Barrie grew extremely fond of his mother realizing how similarly they thought and the shared love of childhood they had. In this time in his life, Barrie also came to know his inner desire of never

wanting to grow up: “The horror of my boyhood was that I knew a time would come when I also must give up the games, and how it was to be done I saw not...I felt that I must continue playing in secret” (Barrie 17). Barrie loved games, adventures and living carefree as a child. He began to dread adulthood and everything that came with it—sounds similar to another little boy we know.

As a result of this realization, Barrie continually lived in a parallel state, longing to seek adventure and never grow up, but also constantly consumed with the idea of time—similar to his character Peter Pan. As Lisa Chaney put it in her biography on Barrie,

While on the one hand it would not be an exaggeration to say that Barrie’s whole being was devoted to escape...on the other his greatest writing was a profound enquiry into the inescapable implications of time, and the idea of one’s own end (Chaney 3).

Though this obsession did not truly take over until later on in his life, Barrie thought on such things as adventure and games as a child quite often. He lived in another world and always wanted to play games and go on adventures. While Barrie’s responsibilities kept him from going on any such adventures, he always dreamt of what kinds of adventures he would take. In such, Peter Pan becomes the embodiment of Barrie’s thoughts and desire to escape reality. Peter vocalizes Barrie’s disgust of the concept of growing up and did what Barrie never could do: escaped and ran away. While Barrie always wanted to go on adventures, he never had the ability. In the introduction to the play, *Peter Pan*, Barrie gives the readers a glimpse of his disappointment in not having opportunities to go on adventures: “craving to be a real explorer, one of those who do things instead of prating of them....he is now a man, real

exploration abandoned (though only because no one would have him)" (Barrie 7). In due time, Barrie realized he grew up and missed his opportunity to seek thrill by exploring an island or fighting pirates. However, they did not stop him from writing about them; thus, the adventures that Peter Pan takes with the Lost Boys.

Unlike Peter Pan, Barrie could not runaway when he realized what his parents expected of him in life. Since his mother valued education for all of her children, she sent him away to school to receive an education. Barrie's mind constantly thought about adventures and escaping though, making him less than enthusiastic about having to go to school, "[he] put the literary calling to bed for a time, having gone to a school where cricket and football were more esteemed" (Birkin 7). Even though he did not act too enthused to go to school, he ended up actually enjoying it. He became more aware of himself as a person, writing about his time at Dumfries Academy in his diary,

"The boys write on walls, name of boy and girl, coupling them together.

As never did it to me I wrote my own with girl's name.

Ashamed at being small enough to travel half ticket by rail" (Birkin 9).

Barrie began to think of himself as different from the other children at school due to his height, or lack of height, and desire to write. Barrie indeed had a unique childhood, all of which seeps through in his writings, especially *Peter Pan*. Though Barrie may not have realized it at the time, each person in his life started developing the idea of Peter Pan very early on in his life. His deceased brother, David, symbolized staying a child forever, coming forth later in Peter Pan himself. Even his mother shows forth in the story, influencing Wendy because of her care giving nature and love of childhood and fantasy.

Let's pause for a second and discuss Wendy; whom, interestingly enough brings up many different ideas and speculations about her own origins and who exactly influenced Barrie to write a character in this way. Speculation surrounds the idea that his mother, Margaret Ogilvy influenced the character of Wendy tremendously. From the stories that she told Barrie about her own childhood, he became fascinated with the idea of his mother as a little girl. Not only that, but some of the character qualities of Wendy align with what Barrie's mother told him about herself as a child. On the other hand, similar to Peter Pan, Wendy holds character contradictions as well. She plays pretend mother with Peter and longs for it to be real, but also is still mesmerized by the idea of Neverland and not growing up, longing to go back with Peter even as an adult: "If only I could go with you,' Wendy sighed" (Barrie 206). She makes this statement when her own daughter, Jane, flies away with Peter Pan at the end of the story. Wendy shows that even though one grows up, the illusion of childhood still holds power over adults.

Barrie's life continued on, with him growing up rapidly and seeking to have his own writing career. After receiving his degree from Edinburgh, he then sought to become a full time writer. However, Barrie's writing career did not come easy, due to a lack of opportunities. When Barrie received his first job, the feeling of dread came along with joy, "this meant leaving home, and probably for good...and he knew in his bones that it would be London next. The adult world lay ahead" (Dunbar 52). The inner battle of pushing adulthood away stormed back with this very adult like milestone in his life. At this point, Barrie was growing up, something that seemed unavoidable.

While Barrie experienced all the difficulties that adulthood brings, Peter Pan never had that chance because he ran away before it could happen: “‘It was because I heard father and mother,’ he explained in a low voice, ‘talking about what I was to be when I became a man’” (Barrie 32). Contrary to Peter though, Barrie had to get a job in order to make a living and because he was in fact growing up. Barrie ultimately moved to London and kept up his writing. In his writing, specifically in *Peter Pan*, readers can easily see traces of Barrie’s own personality. He shows up in the character of Peter, Hook, and even the Darling children, who Peter whisks away to Neverland. Barrie’s love of adventure shows forth in Peter, his mother shows herself in Wendy, and the Barrie himself is also tied to Captain Hook, since he pretended to be the pirate while playing with the Llewelyn Davies boys. Barrie’s writing holds the unique quality of his thoughts coming to life through the pen. He traced his own ideas and theories on various matters in his writing, which increases speculations on Peter Pan because of the common ideas brought up through Peter that Barrie always talked about.

An obvious similarity between Barrie and Peter Pan shows forth when Barrie marries Mary Ansell. Like Peter, Barrie never displayed or explicitly stated having an innate sexual desire for a woman. Yet, since Barrie’s friends began to get married, he also came to desire a companion. However, Barrie never mentions possessing a desire for a sexual relationship in the marriage. Though he socialized frequently in London, the meeting of his future wife did not come until he met a star in one of his plays—Mary Ansell. Mary Ansell captured Barrie’s attention—and he caught hers. They began to see each other; however, their relationship took time to develop into anything further because of Barrie’s slow nature and hesitations towards marriage. Mary did

not like the slow pace of their relationship though, and needed him to make a decision. Barrie resembles Peter Pan in this sense because of his lack of decision-making. Readers see throughout the story, Wendy wants Peter Pan to make a decision and act like someone else, mainly a father. They play pretend, but nothing ever becomes concrete. Similarly, Barrie plays pretend with Mary in their relationship and yet does not make it concrete by proposing. Barrie never liked solid decisions, showing forth in his actions towards Mary.

As one can see, decisions elude Barrie and Peter Pan because they both know that those decisions bring about ultimate circumstances, something neither of them likes. These decisions also mean concrete actions, which Peter Pan shies away from at all costs. He never discusses feelings or anything that holds any solid hold and always lives in a state of make believe: "I was just thinking,' he said, a little scared. 'It is only make-believe, isn't it, that I am a father?" (Barrie 122). Peter loves playing pretend father with Wendy, but the thought of him actually as a father terrifies him. Barrie similarly strays away from decisions, as evident in his relationship with Mary.

Since Peter and Barrie hated making decisions and taking responsibility, many things have caused various speculations to occur. Barrie's hesitation towards proposing and making his relationship with Mary actual has made many speculate on Barrie's sexual nature. Since he never explicitly spoke about a sexual desire towards women, some have suggested that Barrie possessed homosexual tendencies. In a review of Piers Dugdeon's book about Barrie, Tanya Avakian suggests this: "Dugdeon more or less assumes that Barrie was homosexual, but goes on to say, correctly, that if this was a known fact it is unlikely that he would have been entrusted with a family of

boys" (Avakian). Even though speculations and assumptions have come forth about Barrie having homosexual tendencies, in his day, no one thought that or brought it to anyone's attention. Still, no one knows for certain whether Barrie indeed had homosexual tendencies or not, and ultimately he proposed to Mary because he knew he needed to make a decision:

He knew she wanted to marry him, and, in a way, he longed for the stability of a home where he could entertain his friends with an attractive wife at the other end of the table. But he hesitated, as he had hesitated for months. Heaven knows what dark night of the soul James Matthew Barrie went through at the idea of a union with a flesh and blood woman. He would never again be able to escape into romantic images when life brought his high-powered imagination into conflict with the realities of marriage (Dunbar 107).

Barrie knew the responsibility that came with marriage, hence his hesitation towards it. Another reason as to why Barrie proposed alludes to the desire to have the stability of a home. This also could have been a way for him to hide his true homosexual nature because society looked down upon that way of life in this time period. Barrie knew that his mind worked in ways that other's minds did not, setting him apart from other writers. These differences had to do with his desire to go on adventures and to escape reality, something he did not see in his comrades as much as in himself. Thus, he could have looked at marriage as the saving thing he needed to make him like everyone else. As one can see, Barrie's hesitation towards marriage brings up many speculations on the true sexual nature of Barrie, something that we may never know.

The sexual nature of Barrie and Peter Pan still brings up more similarities between the two males. In Barrie's biography, it seems he never expressed a desire to have sexual relations with a woman, especially at a young age, though he has always expressed his fascination with members of the opposite sex. Even though Barrie

marries Mary, he never discusses his marriage with her in any of his autobiographies as W.A. Darlington writes, "He has not spoken directly of his marriage in any of his autobiographical writings, but in *Tommy and Grizel*...there are many passages which I can only interpret as being intended to analyse and account for those very reserves and complications in himself to which Mary Ansell refers" (Darlington 82). These complications in his personality that Mary talks about include his tendency to fall in love with his idea of a woman, rather than the woman herself. Mary experienced this firsthand, which is why she and Barrie divorced in 1909. Though he does not mention his insecurity in the matter anywhere, one can speculate that his disappointments and problems with the issue manifest themselves through Peter Pan, who likewise cannot grow up and have sex with a woman. Peter may play pretend with Wendy all day and act as the father figure; however, when it comes to it, he will never have sex with her. This realization mainly comes from the fact that he can never grow up and therefore will never possess the ability to have sex with her. The desire to forever stay a child involves many things, but at its heart, it refers more to Peter's resistance to adult sexuality, correlating to Barrie's own resistance to it. The idea of adult sexuality terrifies Peter, as seen in the same quote about him verifying the falsehood of him as a father.

On the other hand, the idea of Peter Pan and Wendy having a sexualized relationship is something that has developed in all of the more recent adaptations of *Peter Pan*. One can argue that Barrie never intended for Peter Pan to have any sexual feelings towards Wendy because he is just a little boy. Krystal Hawkins describes it in her essay:

These modern adaptations of Barrie's work consistently simplify Peter Pan by disregarding the homosocial aspects of the text and presenting the narrative with heterosexual denotations that are non-existent in the original. Most modern adaptations also simplify the narrative by removing the issues of heterosexual uncertainty and masculine insecurity, which are prevalent themes in Barrie's original (Hawkins iii).

Hawkins brings forth the interesting argument that modern images of Peter Pan have strayed away from the original in the sense of ignoring the homosexual undertones the story has. These homosexual undertones in Peter Pan also further support the notion of Barrie as a homosexual because he put them into his work. All of these speculations just support the arguments that this story brings many paradoxes to the surface, rather than solid ideas.

Another sign of Barrie's resistance to this part of adulthood involves his obvious impotence. In all of the years of Barrie and Mary's marriage, they did not have a child, something many have contemplated over for years. Though he plays with the Llewelyn Davies boys and acts as a second father in many ways, he never has children of his own, "he had been married for several years, and nobody had heard of either of the Barries' mention a possible family, nor was there any hint that doctors had been consulted" (Dunbar 139). We can assume his longing for parenthood manifested itself in his relationship with the Llewelyn Davies boys because he spent great amounts of time with them. The Barries' lack of children easily could have resulted from the impotence of Barrie, but also could have stemmed from his resistance to grow up. We do not know what went on between Barrie and Mary in their house, but they could have easily never spent alone time together. Through Mary's journals, we can see the strains their marriage went through, especially when Barrie's obsession with the Llewelyn Davies family began to happen. That must have had an affect on their marriage and made

Mary bitter towards Barrie. Even though lack of children likely involves Barrie's incapacity to have children, it also could have stemmed from a strain on their marriage and the lack of their time spent together.

Similarly to Barrie's relationship with the Llewelyn Davies boys, Peter Pan plays pretend father to the Lost Boys; however, he does not possess any responsibility over the Lost Boys or the Darling children. Barrie might have viewed his relationship to the Llewelyn Davies boys in this same manner. He spends large amounts of time with them, but never assumed sole responsibility over them while their parents lived. Instead, Barrie acted as a comrade or friend rather than an adult. Barrie seemed to view himself as a child when around the Llewelyn Davies boys, something that further fueled his desire to go back to childhood. However, before one can further look into Barrie's relationship with this family, one must see how Barrie viewed them and first introduced himself to them.

Barrie's introduction to the Llewelyn Davies family marks the beginning of the most extraordinary time in Barrie's life. Author and biographer on Barrie, Andrew Birkin, describes the family as this:

'there never was a simpler happier family until the coming of Peter Pan' wrote Barrie in *Peter and Wendy*. Doubtless he was aware of that, in describing the Darling family thus, he was alluding with shades of perverse humor, to his own intrusion into the lives of the Llewelyn Davies family, on whom the Darlings were to be based (Birkin 46).

This family became his obsession. He met the mother of these extraordinary and influential boys while at a dinner party and immediately became overwhelmed by her beauty and grace. He described his thoughts about his first impression of this woman, referring to her as "the most beautiful creature he had ever seen" (Birkin 45). She and

the rest of her family immediately entranced him, causing him to form a close and at times unhealthy relationship with her and her sons.

Because of Barrie's close relationship with the Llewelyn Davies boys, they became his friends, muses, and obsession, ultimately helping and influencing him to write his most famous work: "what I want to do first is to give Peter to the Five without whom he never would have existed" (Barrie 3). In the introduction to the play, Barrie gives them the credit for Peter Pan existing because in all of their hours of playing pretend, Peter Pan appeared. The Llewelyn Davies had 5 boys, but at the time of their introduction to Barrie, they had only three: George, Jack and Peter. Barrie loved all three of the boys instantly when they moved near him and his wife in Kensington Park Gardens. However, he became closest with the eldest, George, who had the greatest influence on him, "But it was George who won his closest affection, and their friendship soon started to blossom in the pages of Barrie's notebook" (Birkin 56). This close relationship soon manifested itself into the book, *The Little White Bird*, with George characterized as the little boy "David." From the first line of this story, the reader can make the connection between the main character, David, and George, the eldest Llewelyn Davies boy: "Sometimes the little boy who calls me father brings me an invitation from his mother" (Barrie 1). The "little boy who calls me father" refers to George because of his close relationship with Barrie. Birkin also explains this story as such, "Just as *Tommy and Grizel* chronicled Barrie's failing marriage and his own inability to grow up, so *The Little White Bird* follows his relationship with George and his own profound yearnings for fatherhood—or perhaps, motherhood" (Birkin 57). *The Little White Bird* reveals more about Barrie, as the man in the story seems to be a

shadow of Barrie himself through various similar qualities such as: “My St. Bernard dog accompanied me” (Barrie 31). We know that Barrie had a St. Bernard dog that always accompanied him, especially when the Llewelyn Davies boys were with him. Not only does it show the reader more about Barrie, but *The Little White Bird* happens to have the first time Barrie’s audience gets a glimpse of a future character of Barrie’s—Peter Pan: “If you ask your mother whether she knew about Peter Pan when she was a little girl she will say, ‘Why, of course, I did, child’” (Barrie 95). An entire chapter in *The Little White Bird* describes Peter Pan and how he came into existence, showing the first glimpses of this fascinating little boy.

Therefore, it is easily seen how the shadow of Peter Pan always followed Barrie throughout his life because of his inner struggle with the parallel issue of hating adulthood and yet succumbing to its inevitability. Though Peter’s shadow always pursued Barrie, the first time the reader gets to know Peter does not occur until the publishing of *The Little White Bird* in 1902: “knowing in his innocence that the little white birds are the birds that never have a mother” (Barrie). The “little white birds” symbolize the children who never grow up and never have a mother. As seen in this short story, Barrie used birds and children interchangeably with one another: “All children could have such recollections...for, having been birds before they were human, they are naturally a little wild during the first few weeks, and very itchy at the shoulders, where their wings used to be” (Barrie 96). Barrie’s association with birds and growing up align with the common saying “leaving the nest” or “empty nest” when parents no longer have children at home. Also, *The Little White Bird* gives Barrie’s

audience a taste of his obsession with children and not growing up since it gives the reader one of the first glimpses into Barrie's position on this idea.

Throughout *The Little White Bird*, the reader sees how Barrie views Peter Pan as a little bird as well. In fact, the early stages of Peter involved him as a bird because Barrie viewed all children who did not grow up in this way, as little birds: "He [Peter] was quite unaware already that he had ever been human, and thought he was a bird" (Barrie 96). However, it seems Peter held the place as Barrie's favorite bird, since he later wrote an entire play and story about him. Not only that but because Barrie mulled over this idea of Peter Pan for quite some time, he gave much thought into his origins, "Peter, however, was still able to fly because his mother had forgotten to weigh him at birth. He therefore escaped through the unbarred window and flew back to Kensington Gardens" (Birkin 62). Through these ideas about the origins of Peter Pan and how he came about, the reader sees another idea of Barrie's—his new view on parents. Barrie loved his mother and never spoke ill of her or his father; however, he paints a portrait of parents conversely to this in his stories. The mother forgets to weigh little Peter, causing him to fly away. This somewhat puts the parents in the position of the antagonists. This notion of the parents as the antagonists makes the reader view them negatively—as the ones who go against the idea of Peter Pan and childhood innocence. The association with the parents, or adult, as the villain, resonates and contrasts with the television show, *Once Upon a Time*, which I will discuss later on in the thesis.

However, before jumping into the modern adaptation of this character, one must address the original image of Peter Pan and mull over the speculations on

Barrie's intentions in creating Peter Pan in order to fully grasp the intentions of the writers of *Once Upon a Time*. Scholars discovered that Barrie constantly thought about and discussed Peter Pan with the Llewelyn Davies boys, "whatever the origins, Peter Pan soon became the topic of endless discussions between Barrie and George, recorded by Barrie in *The Little White Bird*" (Birkin 63). As a result of this, we know that each of the boys had an influence on the character of Peter because Barrie revealed that to his readers, "As for myself, I suppose I always knew that I made Peter by rubbing the five of you violently together, as savages with two sticks produce a flame. That is all he is, the spark I got from you" (Barrie 3). Peter is then essentially a hybrid of all 5 of the boys. Not only that, but the boys helped develop Peter, meaning they helped Barrie think of the qualities Peter possessed while they all played together. This is why Barrie gives them so much credit in the introduction before the play was first published in 1928. The Five and Barrie enjoyed spending time together, dreaming about Peter Pan and all of the adventures he had.

Over the time that the Five and Barrie spent together, the idea of Peter Pan developed into an actual little boy: "The Davies boys heard a great deal about the Birds' Island, and presently another name slipped in, Peter Pan. No one knew where he came from, least of all his creator...The boys soon got to know him as if he actually existed" (Dunbar 149). Peter Pan morphed into a solid being, rather than just a figment of Barrie's imagination. Barrie allowed this little boy to inhabit every crevice of his brain, essentially mixing his story and Peter's into one.

As one can see, the birth of Peter Pan did not occur instantly, but rather over years of pondering over the idea of never growing up. This idea embedded in the mind

of Barrie, ultimately causing the feeling to be personified in this beloved character. Many believe the reason for Barrie's love of the Llewelyn Davies brothers sprang from his own longing for boyhood again. He gained inspiration from these boys, but he also got to experience what he longed for again: boyhood. We know this longing had been with Barrie his whole life, as evidence shows in the conversations he had with his mother, as well as the things he wrote in his journals. Thus, having the freedom to act like a little boy and play with his young friends gave Barrie so much joy. He had the ability to be with children and not have the accountability of being a parent: joy and fun without responsibility—something Peter Pan knew a great deal about.

Though scholars have come to various conclusions on the origins of the little boy, the actual character of Peter Pan still causes a variety of ideas and speculations among readers because he has conflicting feelings and emotions. From the story, the reader can speculate that Peter Pan hates the idea of growing up, always eludes danger and seems to have a sinister and cocky side to him. All of these qualities bring up the question of his true nature: is Peter Pan as innocent as everyone has believed since the beginning? Because of this question, Peter hits on the inner paradoxical struggle that Barrie dealt with his entire life by representing the *problem* of growing up.

Inevitably, everyone grows up; but even knowing this, Barrie still found problems with it whenever he faced the idea. Chaney addresses this fact in her biography on Barrie, "For him it wasn't simply that growing up was a passing difficulty that one gradually found ways of accommodating; to an unusual degree its implications touched all aspects of his life" (Chaney 3). In this statement, she points to the fact that Barrie did not just view growing up as inevitable and then accept it; but rather he let it

saturate every aspect of his life, bogging him down with the idea of growing up, much like Peter Pan. Instead of viewing the story of Peter Pan as just a form of escapism from his real life, he saw it as the ability to investigate this idea of growing up. Barrie used Peter Pan as the means to challenge the idea of growing up and in turn, ask the reader why growing up has to occur.

In order to understand the character of Peter Pan though, readers must first grasp just how extensively this concept of growing up fascinated and resonated with Barrie. He did not solely write about it in *Peter Pan*, but also mentioned it in two of his other stories, *Sentimental Tommy* and *Tommy and Grizel*. The character Tommy Sandy also failed to grow up, but his failure had a more honorable quality to it than Peter's. The difference between Tommy and Peter comes from the fact that Tommy does nothing about not wanting to grow up, unlike Peter, who runs away from it by leaving his parents at a young age. Tommy seems to want to return to his childhood because the prospect of adult life terrifies him, which sounds similar to Barrie himself who constantly sought the company of children. It also sounds similar to Peter Pan who was scared at the thought of fatherhood. This description of Tommy by Darlington sounds eerily similar to Barrie when he was faced with marriage, "He [Tommy] is afraid of marriage, afraid of reality, and—since she is an utterly real person—afraid of her" (Darlington 82). Both of these men fear reality and facing real people. Through reading this story, the reader can plainly see how Tommy is tied to Barrie, even to a point of calling him "Barrie's Mr. Hyde" (Darlington 82). At the end of the story, Barrie almost reveals that he truly is Tommy:

"Have you discovered that I was really pitying the boy who was so fond of games that he could not with years become a man, telling nothing that was true,

but doing it with unnecessary scorn in the hope that I might goad you into saying, 'Come, come, you are too hard on him'" (Barrie 264).

Barrie's personal feelings towards growing up manifested themselves in the character of Tommy almost more specifically than in Peter Pan because they alluded to Barrie more explicitly through Tommy. However, Tommy symbolizes just the beginning of Barrie's personal expression of the idea of growing up in his literature.

Peter Pan's true intentions bring up many inner conflicts right when the reader first meets him. He comes to Wendy and tries to convince her to run away with him to Neverland where adults do not exist and no one ever grows up: "Wendy, do come with me and tell the other boys" (Barrie 37). Peter Pan embodies the first bad boy image, even as a child. Asking someone to run away does not necessarily make him evil; however, he turns the parents into the villains, or at least he views them with disdain: "When he saw she was a grown-up, he gnashed the little pearls at her" (Barrie 12). Throughout the whole story, the reader begins to view the parents as the bad guys because of what Peter has told us about them. We know that Peter had parents once, but he ran away from them when he heard them talking about him growing up. Does he now hate parents? We have cause to believe that he does: "Not only had he no mother, but he had not the slightest desire to have one. He thought them very over-rated persons" (Barrie 29). We also know that he cringes at the thought of growing up himself: "I don't want to be a man. O Wendy's mother, if I was to wake up and feel there was a beard!" (Barrie 194). The thought of growing up fills Peter with dread. According to Justine Picadie, Barrie's original title for Peter Pan was "The Boy Who Hated Mothers." Clearly from that title we can assume Peter hates parents. However, a contradiction to this assumption that Barrie places in his novel comes when Peter

pretends to be the father of the lost boys and Wendy pretends to be the mother. Even though he hates parents, he still wants to be one. Though Peter puts on the façade that he never desires to grow up, he actually appears to long for it. Much like Barrie, though, Peter will never have the ability to grow up due to lack of sexuality, as discussed earlier.

Similarly to Barrie, Peter battles the desire of growing up and the resistance to it. He continually puts down mothers and the thought of growing up: “For one thing he [Peter] despised all mothers, except Wendy” (Barrie 90). Yet, he plays pretend mother and father with Wendy and the Lost Boys: “They called Peter “The Great White Father”” (Barrie 116). Of course Wendy played along as the mother: “Secretly Wendy sympathized with them a little, but she was far too loyal a housewife to listen to any complaints against father” (Barrie 117). To reiterate, Peter will never have the ability to have sex with Wendy though, showing that he can never truly grow up and reach adulthood. Conversely though, Peter seems to understand all aspects of what it means to grow up—that ultimately, one dies. Peter’s knowledge on this especially shows forth in his famous quote, “To die will be an awfully big adventure” (Barrie 110). Here the reader sees bits of Peter’s philosophy on life. Yes, his mindset assumes that of a little boy, but on some level, he actually understands the concept of death. Barrie experienced many deaths in his life that all shaped him and the results of how it affected him show forth in Peter Pan. Peter Pan understands that death comes with growing up and that it holds the ultimate unknown adventure—something that both excites and scares him.

No one living can fully understand death because they have not experienced it; therefore, death is something that neither Barrie nor Peter can make sense of. Their apprehension shows how much they fear the unknown, which shows why Peter and Barrie avoid concrete decisions and growing up. Even though Barrie had no way of knowing the future, he did not rest in the peace of that. Rather, he lived out of fear by trying to avoid growing up as much as possible. Peter Pan acts the same way by running away when he heard his parents discussing his future. A reason for that ties into his love of boyhood; however, another reason for his flight ties into his fear of the unknown. Barrie makes Peter view it as the biggest adventure of all because he, obviously and truly, has no idea what it will be like. Though he is only a child, Peter gives death a certain respect that he does not show towards adulthood.

In resisting adulthood, both Barrie and Peter Pan reveal something about their character: they both battle fear. Fear rears its ugly head in various forms, one seen in the form of resistance or hatred. Peter Pan hates adulthood and adults alike because he hates the idea of growing up. However, what if his hatred of growing up only comes from his fear of it? The fact that he ran away also supports this. Author R.D.S. Jack describes it in his novel, "Peter Pan as a 'type' of eternal child possesses all youth's attractive qualities—the energy, imaginative freedom, beauty and wit. But, behind him lies fear—the fear of innocence invaded by sexuality; liberty by responsibility; youth by age" (Jack 167). Jack hits on every one of Peter's, as well as Barrie's, fears. They both feared sexuality, responsibility and age resulting in this unwavering fear of growing up.

As seen in the various common images throughout the story, the reader picks up on one of the most prominent themes in the entire play: adventure. Peter views everything as an adventure, causing him and those around him to live in a false reality. Peter lives with the idea that everything can be turned into a great adventure with no consequences. He always looks for excitement and does not seem content with the ordinary. Barrie's mindset aligns with this concept. Barrie's sole desire in life involved wanting to go on adventures to islands and discover things. He longed for the types of adventures he read about, discussing this personal longing in his introduction to *Peter Pan*, as mentioned earlier: "craving to be a real explorer, one of those who do things instead of prating of them....he is now a man, real exploration abandoned (though only because no one would have him)" (Barrie 7). Unfortunately for him, he never had the opportunity to go on any adventure, thus focusing on writing about them. Since he could not physically participate in an adventure, his mind always thought of them, thus creating Peter Pan's adventures.

The sense of adventure Barrie carried with him showed forth with the Llewelyn Davies boys. They would always make up stories about vast adventures they went on, ultimately creating *Peter Pan* together in that manner. For example, while playing one day, Barrie created a villain for himself to play named Captain Swarthy. Later on, this pirate becomes the infamous Captain Hook, otherwise known as Peter's sworn enemy. It is interesting to see and read about all of the adventures between Barrie and his young friends because it shows that this beloved children's story did not just come from Barrie sitting at a desk. His entire life influenced this tale, from his brother David to these young boys. We know that Barrie even put a little of himself into the character

Peter. This mixture of elements is why this tale has stayed around for so many years after its publication.

The author White brings up an interesting point as to why Peter Pan holds so much power over generation after generation, "Alone of all of Barrie's literary works, Peter Pan remains vital today because it speaks nostalgically about our wishes to keep children young, while reminding us mercilessly about how cruel childhood can really be" (White vii). After all, Peter Pan is only a boy. However, White and many others have speculated over this childhood character demonstrating to readers that he represents more than just childhood innocence. What Peter Pan does involves much more than just inviting its readers to escape reality and dream of Neverland; Peter Pan allows readers, both children and adults alike, to challenge the norm and think on why they grow up and to challenge the notion of childhood innocence.

The reason that Peter Pan fascinates generation after generation of readers comes from the fact that Barrie juxtaposes the states of childhood and adulthood against one another through Peter himself constantly showing a desire to be a father and a loathing of mothers. He shows the audience the cruelty and wonders of each side, furthering the statement that all things have two sides to them, both good and bad. Children represent the ultimate form of innocence, but also show how much cruelty comes with it. Barrie personally experienced this in his own life, specifically through the death of his brother, but also in other tragedies he experienced his whole life. The tragic event happened and shocked the entire family, but it also brought Barrie and his mother closer together. This idea of paralleling images manifests itself

through the story. However, it is not the only idea in this story that brings up questions.

The idea of multiplicity in *Peter Pan* also manifests itself in the main setting of the story: Neverland. Neverland does not embody one thing specifically, but rather a multitude of whatever the child thinking of it wants. Barrie intended for it to seem this way: "For the Neverland is always more or less an island, with astonishing splashes of color here and there...of course the Neverlands vary a good deal" (Barrie 7). Barrie intends for Neverland to hold different characteristics in each child's mind; hence the appeal to so many generations because each reader can make Neverland to his or her own specifications. White and Tarr also describe it in their introduction:

Neverland is never innocent, nor is heaven or hell, nor reward or punishment, but rather an imaginary place individual to each child, reeking with desires for safety and home as strong as those that lured each child away from home in the first place" (White viii).

Viewing Neverland as an unsafe place unsettles readers who have always envisioned it as an island full of happiness and joy, inhabited by forever children, who always play pretend and have fun. Conversely, these authors argue that Barrie never intended for it to be that way, since the island holds many dangers, such as pirates, Indians and a ticking crocodile. When looking further into the background of the story itself, the idea of Neverland as actually not innocent holds more truth to it.

Neverland holds many dangers that do not seem suitable for children. Pirates seek to kill lost boys and the boys want to kill Indians. Peter Pan always gets into mischief and an adventure always happens. The island sounds like an interesting place that would never bore you, which is exactly how Barrie wanted it to seem. He intended for this island to be an adventure, not a safe haven. He always longed for adventure for

himself, yet never had the opportunity to go on one. Because of that, he added adventures into his stories where he could always go freely and frequently.

In spite of this, a question arises: because of Neverland's lack of innocence and abundance of danger, why do children dream about this place and the boy who can take them there? They dream about it because of the malleability it holds with each child. Every child has a different personality and unique passions, just like the Darling children in the story. The different ways that Neverland can appear appeals to the variety of audiences, causing the dominance of this story for many years. Peter Pan himself also can relate to each child's personality in different ways because he contains a variety of characteristics and qualities. He is mischievous, playful, sweet, naughty, arrogant, and many more all wrapped up into one little boy. Therefore, anyone can relate to him because of the different facets of his character. White and Tarr address the influence of Peter Pan in their introduction:

Peter Pan seems to be the mightiest figure in children's literature...leaving his traces on our stories or his shadow to haunt us. He engages us in secret dialogue so that we continue the conversation that Barrie began, arguing the silliness of Neverland even as we manage to squeeze Peter into our literary dreams. (White)

They argue that ever since the beginning of Peter Pan's existence, he has dominated children's literature. Over the years, authors have introduced a variety of children and fantasy characters to audiences, all with influential qualities. Yet, Peter Pan still comes out as the prevailing and quintessential image of children's fiction. He contradicts himself in more ways than one, but that has not affected his popularity on the genre.

Barrie wrote *Peter Pan* in an era when childhood began to hold value in the eyes of adults, rather than looked down upon, "The elements making up *Peter Pan*

inescapably reflect certain ideas and preoccupations of the time. Barrie's genius lies in how he treats them" (Chaney 207). Chaney points out how the view of children shifted and how Barrie addressed these issues in his story, *Peter Pan*. This era produced an abundance of children's literature, but what makes Barrie's story unique involves his portrayal of the child and how it attacks adulthood and everyone's innate desire to remain children. Since Barrie portrayed Peter in this way, readers can see why it has stayed so popular over the years. Peter paints a unique image of childhood, unlike other stories written in this era because he brings out their innocence while also questioning adulthood.

Another reason why Peter holds an enormous amount of power over children's literature comes from the ideas he plants in readers' minds. Peter symbolizes the quintessential example of never growing up and all the glory that comes with it. The presumption can be made that every person battles with the desire to never grow up at one point in their childhood. Growing up seems scary, daunting and unknown: all things uncomfortable. However, with the opportunity to fly away to Neverland and never have to grow up, why would you not take it? The doubt that all children seem to battle is what attracts them to Peter Pan.

In terms of relating this concept of not growing up back to Barrie's own childhood, many correlations are made when it comes to his own choices and thoughts. From a young age, we see how his own conversations with his mother immediately put the desire of never growing up into his mind. She would talk of her childhood, romanticizing it in a most desirable way. Barrie grew to share this romanticized view of childhood with his mother, putting him in another world entirely. The death of his

brother also shifted his view on growing up. As mentioned earlier, his brother died just short of his 14th birthday, making him still a child, preserved in that age of innocence for eternity. When studying the character of Peter Pan, the reasons behind why Barrie created him the way he did show forth more clearly when one looks into his life. Therefore, modern viewers of Peter Pan can better understand why this new and updated version of the character acts the way he does. Perhaps the new version of Peter Pan aligns closer with Barrie's version of Peter than originally thought because, at first glance, *Once Upon a Time's* portrayal of Peter comes across extremely dark and sinister.

In the first episode of season 3 of *Once Upon a Time*, Peter Pan is introduced as the ultimate villain, causing fear in every character on the show because of what he has the ability to do. Peter can manipulate all situations, creating chaos wherever he goes, which makes this boy seem very different from the little fairy boy that Barrie first wrote about in the early 1900s. However, in order to understand the principle villain in the show and why he acts the way he does, one must first understand the show itself.

Once Upon a Time takes place as today's modern book of fairy tales. It portrays all of the beloved fairy tale characters that everyone grew up with: Snow White, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, and more. It also adds more depth to less known tales, such as Mulan, Rumplestiltskin, Little Red Riding Hood, and many others. What this show does so brilliantly with these characters has to do with the storylines and depth it gives each of them, making each one come to life. Rather than just depict the commonly known tales, the screenwriters add twists and turns that no one sees

coming. Not only that, but it gives a completely different story than one might not expect causing unlikely alliances among characters, and making the viewers create shocking allegiances to formerly unloved characters. One character that receives a drastic makeover is Peter Pan.

Once Upon a Time overturns the original idea of Peter Pan by turning him into the ultimate villain, hated by all. Even though he is just a boy, the audience sees how much manipulation and selfishness his character holds. Peter no longer portrays the image of an innocent little fairy boy, but instead, he takes the place as a villain. He turns people into pawns for his own gain and seeks to get what he wants, no matter the cost. This updated version of Peter Pan does not care about who he hurts, as long as he gets his ultimate desire: eternal youth and power. His story involves more darkness than the original play Barrie wrote. Even though critics have not begun to write about this show or Peter Pan in the show yet, one can still critically look at it and see the similarities and differences between the original Peter and the Peter portrayed in the show.

The audience first hears of this boy when the plot forces the protagonists to go and rescue one of the show's major characters, Henry, from Peter's evil clutches. The protagonists must venture to this land known as Neverland in order to prevent Peter Pan from taking Henry's beliefs and using them for his own benefit. Hook and Rumplestiltskin have warned all of the others of the gravity of Peter's evil, making them fear him even more. As a result of this, even before the audience meets Peter, they have an image of him branded into their mind coming from what the other characters say about him. The audience and characters on the show first hear of Peter

from an unlikely alliance, Captain Hook, who warns the rest of the crew about Pan: “Careful, he may look like a boy, but he is a bloody demon.” A demon holds a strong connotation with evil, which is exactly how Hook thinks of Peter. No matter how mischievous Barrie intended for Peter to act, his character does not hold anything evil about him from the original interpretation of him. Yet, the show’s writers want the audience to view him as an evil villain set out to get what he wants and ruin others in the process.

Neverland no longer holds the same magical and fantasy qualities it once had because Peter no longer has the well-known innocence about him. Realizing that the show has changed Peter Pan in this way results in more critical analysis of the character. Looking into Barrie’s life and the birth of Peter Pan has satisfied, and yet intensified, my curiosity on the matter. One cannot just skim the surface of Peter Pan and get his or her answers because of the abundance of information and critical reviews on the matter. However, even though the new adaptation has not brought as much criticism yet, it still stirs different emotions and thoughts in the reader’s mind while viewing each episode.

The truth of this version of Peter Pan comes in his honesty. He honestly wants what he wants and does not give the appearance of goodness. What makes this version of Peter evil is that he will do whatever it takes in order to gain ultimate power and eternal youth. The idea of never growing up consumes him to the point that he kidnaps and kills for it. His personal history shows this about him. As each episode airs, the audience learns more about Peter Pan’s story and what made him desire to stay young forever.

Interestingly enough, Peter Pan once had a son. Hating life as an adult, he and his son flew to an island that fulfilled all of their desires. However, because of his desire to remain a youth, Peter traded his son for eternal youth. Right from that moment, the audience begins to hate Peter for his decisions and actions. The show portrays Peter as a once-man turned boy forever, rather than a boy who stays a boy forever. Not only that, but Peter Pan puts forth a paradox since he was once a father. This paradox involves parents turning into the villains, something subtly seen in the original story of Peter Pan as well. This idea of parents as the villains resonates with the show given Peter Pan's true identity, Rumplestiltskin's father, and yet it contrasts with it because Peter Pan becomes evil, and known to the characters as the worst possible villain. The modern view of Peter Pan through the show contradicts itself because he holds both positions of evil parent and evil child. Though one can see how this portrayal of Peter obviously differs from the original story, this story also holds truth and aligns with Barrie's version of Peter.

The truth comes from the intentions of Barrie in writing *Peter Pan*. He wanted the readers and viewers of the play to think while enjoying his work. Rather than just lamenting the fact that growing up inevitably happens, Barrie wanted his audience to think about why. It seems impossible to read *Peter Pan* and not think about growing up and why it inevitably happens, since that theme prevails throughout the entire story. With that as the case, darkness inevitably also shows up woven into this story.

The darkness that illuminates itself from the crevices in the story appears in the intentions of Peter Pan. As discussed earlier, Peter never truly comes out and says anything downright evil or wicked. This sinister element from his character shows up

in the underlying message he gives off to the audience. His passion for not growing up and against adults manifests itself into a mischievous and threatening element about the boy. Though he seems innocent, Peter Pan is actually quite threatening. He threatens the very nature of growing up and the norm that everyone knows and is familiar with.

Everyone knows that growing up will happen at some point to every child, but Peter Pan threatens this knowledge by planting the seed of doubt into children's and adult's minds. He gives them the idea that growing up does not actually have to occur and that they have the ability to choose to not grow up, by instead running away to do whatever they want, whenever they want. He persuades children to leave the familiar because he wants them to experience the constant childhood that he will always experience. But no matter how much Peter Pan denies his feelings, he longs for company. His loneliness shows forth most evidently through his constant need to bring someone to Neverland. It also shows in his playing games and pretend constantly. He does not want to face the reality of life and the tragedy that it brings. He knows that life brings ugly things with it and therefore runs away from feelings and truth whenever he faces them.

The similarities in Barrie's *Peter Pan* and *Once Upon a Time's* Peter Pan come from the threats that they bring. As discussed above, Peter threatens the norm and makes children and adults question things and doubt the plan. The show's Peter Pan threatens everything about the characters lives and what they are used to. He wants magic all for himself so he can be the most powerful person alive. He threatens the system by desiring these things. Similarly, Barrie's Peter Pan threatens the normality of

growing up. They both possess some sort of power over normalcy that scares the human spirit.

Perhaps this was the way that Barrie wanted us to view Peter Pan, as a threat and not as an innocent little child figure. However, through the different interpretations of this play and little boy, Peter has become this emblem of innocence and childhood. Yet, that was not how he was actually written. He actually has an arrogance about him that does not give off innocence at all. His arrogant nature shows forth in his declarations about himself and when he credits himself for things that others did for him, namely the sewing of his shadow. This one instance with Wendy starts the beginning of their relationship and gives us a glimpse of the true character of Peter Pan when he declares, "Oh the cleverness of me." (Barrie 30) This stands out because the reader sees that Peter is quite an arrogant little boy: "It is humiliating to have to confess that this conceit of Peter was one of his most fascinating qualities. To put it with brutal frankness, there never was a cockier boy" (Barrie 30). Peter's cockiness is one of his most obvious traits, something not usually associated with childhood innocence.

Throughout the pages of this story, the reader clearly sees how this little boy holds many conflicting emotions and ideas. For one to fully grasp the true intent behind his nature, one would need to talk to Barrie himself and find out the true meaning behind everything. However, since Barrie always acted shy about the actual nature of Peter Pan, all scholars have to go on is the history and the characteristics of this little boy. One scholar who speculates on the story of *Peter Pan* says this of the little boy,

But there is a force at work in *Peter Pan* that goes beyond a tolerant regret over something we must always inevitably lose....Barrie sets up a deliberately antagonistic relationship between adulthood and childhood...he reveals the truly violent nature of that relationship and its groundedness in an irrational hatred (Coats 4).

The idea that Coats puts forth in this poignant statement alludes to the view of Peter Pan in *Once Upon a Time*. She brings up the idea of hatred as a common feeling in Peter Pan, if not his only feeling, “Barrie sets up a stark choice for both Wendy and the Lost Boys: to choose home, hearth, and a loving family means to reject the heartlessness of Pete Pan (which is how Barrie characterizes his essential childness)” (Coats 4).

According to Karen Coats, Barrie created Peter Pan with hatred in his heart because that allows him to live as a little boy forever. Barrie seems to associate childhood with heartlessness, which is not what one usually thinks of when they view children.

Children bring joy to parents and have innocence as their main characteristic, not heartlessness. However, Coats’ statements lines up perfectly with *Once Upon a Time’s* version of Peter Pan who gives up his heart when he trades his son for youth.

Readers of Peter Pan often miss the hatred that he has in his heart; however, according to Barrie that essentially makes him who he is. The show *Once Upon a Time* brings Peter’s hatred to the surface, which essentially makes him a villain. He loathes the idea of adulthood and that makes him evil. Yet according to Coats and other scholars, Barrie intended for him to have a hatred of adulthood and to challenge the common idea of growing up.

With all of these differing emotions and things about Peter Pan, it is easy to form him into whatever one wants of him. This is why the writers of *Once Upon a Time* make him a villain on the show. They took the sinister and malicious qualities about

Peter and morphed him into something completely different than other interpretations. As a result of this, the audience has a fresh way of looking at Peter Pan in order to revisit the story and formulate their own conspiracies on the boy and how Barrie intended for him to be written.

The character of Peter Pan in *Once Upon a Time* consumes his thoughts and entire existence upon staying young. He cares about nothing else and will hurt anyone in the process in order to get what he wants. Sadly though, in acting this way, Peter misses out on the beauty that life brings. The audience sees this physically in the show when his son gets taken away from him. The result of him desiring to stay young forever means he cannot be with his son. The consequences of this desire bring many negative results. The writers seem to send a message to its audience by showing the negative side of never growing up. Not everything brings disaster and pain because there are always two ways of looking at a situation, and that includes childhood and growing up. This is the way Peter Pan should be viewed.

Not only does the new version of Peter Pan bring forth thoughts about the intent of the character, but also other speculations come to the surface involving the author of this story. Though not many critics have written on the matter yet, the idea that the man who wanted to return to his boyhood in *Once Upon a Time* refers more to Barrie himself than to Peter Pan has recently surfaced. Readers know that throughout Barrie's life, he consistently wanted to return to his childhood and remain a boy forever just by his mannerisms and how much time he spent with the Llewelyn Davies boys. It seems from this knowledge the screenwriters for the show manifest more of Barrie's character into their version of Peter Pan rather than the actual boy named

Peter Pan. The version of Peter Pan on television now embodies Barrie's character because of his desire to stay youthful. Though Barrie never traded his son for it, essentially he did trade having children in order to spend so much time with the Llewelyn Davies boys because he neglected his wife. Barrie never had children and thus never "officially" grew up and gained that responsibility. *Once Upon a Time's* Peter Pan trades the responsibility for youth, something Barrie might have done given the option. Having this theory float around gives the show another level of depth allowing the audience to further speculate on the reasons behind the character they have always loved and his desire to return to childhood.

Though Barrie never had a magical shadow turn him back into a boy, negative consequences still occurred as a result his relationship with the Llewelyn Davies boys. His wife ends up leaving him and ultimately the story of *Peter Pan* brings tragedy to the Llewelyn Davies boys themselves. Like the idea of Neverland, both positive and negative things resulted from Barrie's play. The television series also represents the negative and positive affects of a strong desire through the character Peter in a new and somewhat frightening way. This version of Peter has a more menacing character about him, showing the evil he possesses. It frightens and challenges the once innocent view of Peter children held, making more room for individual interpretation. Not only that, but this new Peter Pan shows modern viewers the massive influence this character has over children's literature and the fairy tale.

The fact that this popular and modern show uses Peter Pan as one of its principal villains shows the consistent influence of Barrie's story over generation after generation of readers in children's literature. Many have mulled over this revelation

for years, ever since the beginning of the story pondering over why Peter Pan has this power over a massive genre of literature. Other children's stories and characters come and go; nevertheless, Peter Pan remains a constant in the broad category. At the core of this argument, the obvious reason behind his popularity sits: Peter Pan is a fantasy fairy tale. Fairy tales take its readers to other worlds where they can act as whoever and whatever they want without any restrictions. It allows one to forget about his or her problems for the present time and escape into a magical land. Fitting into all of these categories, *Peter Pan* holds the ultimate power of escapism by transporting the reader to Neverland, where all one's problems disappear with no responsibility. The lack of responsibility on this clever little island captivates the audience more so than anything else.

Peter Pan also allows much room for one's own individual interpretation. Yes, Barrie gives his reader specifics on his character and the story of Neverland; however, one can also take the place of Neverland and make it into his or her own personal place of freedom and lack of responsibility. This freedom to personalize the story of Peter Pan shows forth most evidently in *Once Upon a Time*. As discussed earlier, the show's writers have taken the story and put their own twist on the character and how they interpret him. They make him into a character of their own choosing because they have the freedom to do so. Perhaps when they were younger, they did not view Peter Pan as this innocent little boy. Perhaps they have always been afraid of Peter Pan and the fact that he could fly into their house at anytime and whisk them away to Neverland. Not everyone views Peter Pan in the same light; another reason why this

character holds such malleability. He has the capacity to form into anything the reader or audience wants.

Over the years since the beginning of this play, *Peter Pan* has caused a ruckus among children's literature. It seems that writers of children's literature cannot write something without first coming face to face with the ideas that Barrie brought forth in his own children's story. As writers Donna R. White and C. Anita Tarr write in their collection of essays on Barrie, "Peter Pan seems to be the mightiest figure in children's literature, for most writers, especially fantasy writers, have to wrestle with his image at some point, either happily admiring the influence or so steeped in it that they do not even recognize it" (White xix). They suggest that his power over children's literature masses so large that every writer of children's literature must face him at one point or another. This has truth to it because many children's stories involve not growing up, or have some traces of children seen as the innocent and adults as the not innocent. Not only those ideas, but also adventure, time and fairies all appear in many children's stories that have come after Barrie's tale. He reinvented children's fiction by bringing new ideas and concepts to this genre that still implement themselves today. Barrie's little shadow child holds more power than he could ever know, all because of his views on growing up and adulthood.

Peter Pan's story of flying away to Neverland and living with the fairies made an impact on the genre of children's fiction. Barrie's entire life affected this story, with his mother, his brother's death, the Llewelyn Davies boys, and many other crucial points in his life. Barrie's thoughts revolved around time and the idea of staying a child forever. Like Peter Pan, Barrie did not want to become an adult and have responsibility. Since

he could not fly away to Neverland, he wrote about it and the adventures he would have in his stories. Barrie experienced all of the ups and downs that come with adulthood, saving Peter from that agony. Through his character, he was able to experience an adventure of a lifetime, killing off pirates and flying with fairies. This special adventure is not only Barrie's though, as the Llewelyn Davies brothers influenced Peter Pan tremendously because without them, Peter would not exist.

Peter brings up many contradicting arguments, though he is only a child. He causes the reader to question this idea of time and growing up, and makes them wonder about their own personal Neverland, which Barrie intended for his story to do. So much so that the television show, *Once Upon a Time*, decided to twist the original story and make Peter Pan a villain. This modern interpretation of the little boy caused its viewers to revisit this beloved tale and figure out why they made him evil in the show. Though it seems farfetched, it actually holds much truth to it as Peter has a mischievous, and perhaps darker side to him than originally perceived.

In order to fully understand this character, one must sit down with Barrie himself and discuss Peter Pan. However, since that cannot come to fruition, we must satisfy our curiosity of this little boy with contemplating the origins and ideas he brings forth through readings and other means. However, as time passes, we will grow up and soon forget to fly, moving on to adult things and gaining responsibilities, as the cycle must happen: "and thus it will go on, so long as children are gay and innocent and heartless" (Barrie 207).

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